

VZCZCXRO9789
RR RUEHPB
DE RUEHWL #0680 2602350
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 172350Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4704
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 4960
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 0683
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0641
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 0579
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHDC
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 000680

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE D FOR FRITZ, EAP/FO, EUR/RPM, EAP/ANP, INL/LP FOR
GWELZANT, L/OES FOR JROACH, OES FOR WGIBBONS-FLY
SUVA FOR REO JMURPHY
NSC FOR KATRIN FRASER
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISD JESSICA POWERS
PACOM FOR J01E/JA/J233/J5/SJFHQ
HOMELAND SECURITY FOR PAUL FUJIMURA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2027

TAGS: EWWT EMIN KTIA PBTS PREL SNAR XB XV NZ SW
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH COOK ISLANDS DEPUTY PM ON MARITIME
COOPERATION

REF: WELLINGTON 419

Classified By: Consul General John Desrocher for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
).

This message was drafted by ConGen Auckland and approved by
Embassy Wellington.

¶1. (C) During a recent visit to Auckland, Cook Islands Deputy Prime Minister Sir Terepai Maoate, along with Associate Minister Junior Maoate (his son) and CEO Ratu Mato, met with the Ambassador and Auckland CG. Maoate explained that the Cooks are anxious to expand their thin economic base beyond fishing and tourism. The GCI is particularly interested in finding ways to exploit what Maoate described as vast mineral wealth under the seabed. Maoate claimed that the sea floor of the Cooks's economic exclusion zone (nearly 700,000 square miles) held vast reserves of manganese and other minerals potentially worth billions of dollars to the small island nation. Maoate insisted that much of this is recoverable with current technologies and could transform the Cooks's economy. Maoate expressed great interest in U.S. investment in mineral exploitation.

¶2. (C) Maoate also explained that the GCI is hamstrung in its efforts to patrol its economic exclusion zone. The country's lone patrol boat depends on private, island-hopping aircraft for leads on vessels fishing illegally, vessels that inevitably disappear long before the patrol boat can intercept them. The Deputy PM sought U.S. help in expanding an airfield in the Cooks to beef up patrolling. Specifically, expanding the facilities at this airfield would make it usable for a French government aircraft that provides surveillance for French territories in the region. In exchange for use of the facility, Maoate suggested, the French would help patrol the Cooks's territorial waters. Maoate proposed a "joint venture" with the U.S. to expand the airstrip.

¶3. (SBU) Maoate also strongly encouraged the Ambassador to visit the Cooks in the near future; an invitation the Ambassador promised to take advantage of as soon as his

schedule allowed.

¶4. (C) Comment. Maoate seemed only superficially aware of the USG's proposed Bilateral Maritime Security Treaty (reftel). Not surprisingly, Maoate was less interested in how such an agreement would aid USG efforts to combat drug smuggling in the Caribbean than in how it might help the GCI police its own territorial waters. End comment.

MCCORMICK